

LETTERS to the Editor

Vitamin E Fatigue?

TO THE EDITOR: Dr. Harold M. Cohen's interesting letter appearing recently in *CALIFORNIA MEDICINE* [Calif Med 119:72, July 1973] has just been brought to my attention and I hasten to make what comment I can on it.

We have never known vitamin E to produce fatigue such as Dr. Cohen describes. Indeed, it is used very widely all over the world by athletes and race horse owners to *increase* energy. There are a good many references in the literature to attest to the accuracy of this observation, one of the most outstanding being General Nayar's observations on mountain troops in the Himalayas who were given large doses of vitamin E.

It would be a singular thing if eating what amounts to a food would *decrease* one's energy. I can't help thinking that this is one case where a controlled series of observations would be of real value.

EVAN V. SHUTE, FRCS(C), FRSM
London, Ontario

P.S. One of my friends has taken 8,000 I.U. of vitamin E daily for many years; my wife has taken 4,800 for years and I 1,600 for years. No undue fatigue! Thousands have taken 1,600 I.U. or more. No ill effects.

REFERENCE

Nayar MC: *Indian J Physiol Pharmacol* 8:49, 1964

Side Effects from Vitamin E

TO THE EDITOR: "Fatigue Caused by Vitamin E" was the title of a letter to the editor by Harold M. Cohen, MD (Calif Med 119:72, Jul 1973), in which he described extreme fatigue and weakness experienced by himself, his partner and many of his patients on a starting dose of 800 international units d, alpha-tocopherol daily, and that "response to withdrawal of vitamin E was dramatic." His patients were described as "some with arteriosclerotic heart disease, but mostly men in their mid-thirties or early forties who were in excellent health . . ."

These observations are contrary to our experience in the clinical evaluation of vitamin E in various dermatological conditions of obscure etiology over the past eight years, during which we have administered d, alpha-tocopheryl acetate in daily doses ranging from 400 to 1,600 international units to several hundred patients, including myself, my wife and two girls on our office staff. There has not been a single complaint of fatigue or weakness.

The only side effects we have noted have been beneficial ones. Early in our investigation, one patient, who was being treated for a dermatological condition, mentioned that since taking vitamin E he had ceased having nocturnal leg cramps. Since both my wife and I were having severe nocturnal leg cramps, and two members of our office staff had suffered from the restless legs syndrome, we all began taking vitamin E about three or four years ago and have continued ever since, on dosages ranging from 800 to 1,200 international units daily, with practically complete control of the muscle spasms, and no evidence whatever of fatigue or weakness. Other types of muscle spasms which have responded partially or completely to vitamin E include intermittent claudication, nocturnal rectal cramps (three cases), and exercise cramps. Our preliminary report on leg cramps¹ was confirmed by Cathcart in over 100 patients in a private orthopedic practice.² At least half a dozen patients who were being treated for dermatological conditions experienced another beneficial side effect in the form of relief from anginal pain, so that they were able to reduce or to discontinue nitroglycerine.